

Message Text

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ACTION CU-05

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/048 W

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R 031235Z MAR 78

FM AMEMBASSY MBABANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4104

INFO AMCONSUL CAPETOWN

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OEXC, WZ

SUBJECT: EVALUATION OF AMSPEC THEODORE CAM

REF: PRETORIA 1090

1. MR. THEODORE CAM BEGAN HIS THREE-DAY VISIT TO SWAZILAND WITH AN IMMEDIATE LEAP INTO WORK. AFTER LEAVING THE AIRPORT, HE TOOK A THREE-HOUR FAMILIARIZATION TOUR OF SWAZILAND, INCLUDING THE PULP MILL, AND TWO PERI-URBAN SQUATTER SETTLEMENTS IN THE MBABANE AREA. THAT NIGHT HE WAS THE GUEST OF HONOR AT A DINNER AT THE CHARGE'S RESIDENCE THAT CENTERED ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL TRADITIONS IN SWAZILAND. GUESTS INCLUDED THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE NATIONAL TRUST COMMISSION, THE DEAN OF THE HUMANITIES DEPARTMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF SWAZILAND, AND TWO PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN LOCAL CULTURAL AFFAIRS.

2. MR. CAM'S SECOND DAY IN SWAZILAND BEGAN WITH A VISIT TO THE OFFICES OF THE MBABANE TOWN COUNCIL AND DISCUSSIONS WITH SEVERAL OFFICIALS ON LOW-COST HOUSING AND URBAN PLANNING.

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THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY A VISIT TO MBABANE'S LARGEST AND OLDEST SLUM AREA AND A VISIT TO A LOW-COST URBAN HOUSING PILOT PROJECT.

3. THAT AFTERNOON A SEMINAR WAS HELD IN THE USIS LIBRARY WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL MINISTRIES CONCERNED WITH URBAN HOUSING. MR. CAM, WHO UP UNTIL THIS POINT HAD DISPLAYED AN ASSERTIVE, CONFIDENT,

AGGRESSIVE CHARACTER IN HIS INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS AND AT THE DINNER, CHANGED HIS STYLE COMPLETELY. AFTER HIS OPENING REMARKS, MR. CAM PROCEEDED TO READ A CHAPTER FROM A BOOK HE IS WRITING ON HIS BACKGROUND AND HIS PHILOSOPHY OF ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING. SINCE MR. CAM WAS READING ALOUD A TEXT THAT WAS MEANT TO BE READ --NOT SPOKEN -- IT HAD A FORMAL, STILTED SOUND. MR. CAM SOON LOST THE INTEREST OF HIS AUDIENCE. SECONDLY, MR. CAM HAD BEEN ASKED TO SPEAK ON ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING ECONOMICS. BY CONCENTRATING ON HIS OWN BACKGROUND, PHILOSOPHY AND ACHIEVEMENTS, HE NEGLECTED THE REQUESTED TOPIC, DESPITE VALIANT EFFORTS BY ONE OR TWO PARTICIPANTS TO PULL HIM INTO THE AREA OF THE ECONOMICS OF ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING.

4. THE GROUP MR. CAM MET WITH CONSISTED OF HIGHLY QUALIFIED PEOPLE (ALMOST ONE HALF WERE EXPATRIATES SECONDED HERE BY VARIOUS DONOR COUNTRIES OR ORGANIZATIONS). MOST WERE VISIBLY DISTURBED BY HIS USE OF GENERALITIES RATHER THAN OFFERING SPECIFIC INFORMATION WHEN QUESTIONED. ALSO, AS THIS WAS MR. CAM'S FIRST VISIT TO AFRICA, THEY FOUND HIS OBSERVATIONS ON AFRICAN HOUSING PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS BASED ON A FEW DAYS EACH IN KENYA, CAMEROON AND LIBERIA TO BE LACKING IN DEPTH AND UNDERSTANDING. CAM WAS AWARE, AND REITERATED, THAT IDEAS THAT HAD WORKED IN THE U.S. WOULD NOT NECESSARILY WORK IN AFRICA. BUT, SINCE HE HAD NOT HAD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ANY EXPERIENCE OUTSIDE THE U.S., HIS IDEAS TENDED TO BE SEEN AS NOT VIABLE FOR SWAZILAND AND CONTRIBUTED LITTLE TO THE CURRENT DEBATE INSIDE THE GOS ON WHAT SWAZILAND'S HOUSING POLICY SHOULD BE.

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INFO AMCONSUL CAPETOWN
AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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5. THE FOLLOWING DAY CAM WENT TO THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF SWAZILAND FOR SEMINARS WITH URBAN GEOGRAPHY AND ECONOMICS STUDENTS. UNFORTUNATELY, THE DAY GOT OFF TO A BAD START WHEN THE EMBASSY OFFICER WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR USIS WORK WAS UNAVAILABLE DUE TO A DEATH OF AN AMERICAN CITIZEN. CAM WAS MET BY THE FULBRIGHT PROFESSOR IN ECONOMICS WORKING AT UBS. THE HEAD OF THE GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT, WHO WAS TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR CAM'S PROGRAMMING AT THE UNIVERSITY, TURNED UP QUITE INEBRIATED AND WAS ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH LITTLE. LECTURES TO A COMBINED GROUP OF ECONOMICS AND URBAN GEOGRAPHY STUDENTS WERE MADE BUT DUE TO A SUBSEQUENT SEMESTER BREAK, WE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO FIND OUT HOW THE LECTURES WERE RECEIVED. SEVERAL PLANNED AFTERNOON VISITS TO URBAN SITES AND AN INDUSTRIAL PARK IN THE MANZINI AREA DID NOT MATERIALIZE. CAM SPENT THE AFTERNOON SIGHTSEEING AND SHOPPING.

6. THAT NIGHT A WORKING DINNER WAS HELD AT THE IRO'S RESIDENCE WITH THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE REGIONAL AID OFFICE AND THE DEPUTY RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE OF UNDP.
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BOTH ORGANIZATIONS ARE IN THE PROCESS OF BECOMING INVOLVED IN URBAN HOUSING PROJECTS IN SWAZILAND. THE DINNER PRODUCED A HIGHLY USEFUL EXCHANGE OF IDEAS AND INFORMATION AND MAY HAVE RESULTED IN A THOROUGH RE-EXAMINATION OF THE UNDP PILOT LOW-COST HOUSING PROJECT IN SWAZILAND AS WELL AS IN CAM'S BECOMING INVOLVED WITH AID/W.

7. THE FOLLOWING MORNING CAM VISITED THE SWAZILAND NATIONAL MUSEUM AND HAD A LONG AND VALUABLE DISCUSSION WITH THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR AND ACTING CURATOR ON THE FUNCTIONS OF A MUSEUM. CAM WAS ASKED AND AGREED TO BE A CONSULTANT ON THE NEW NATIONAL MUSEUM BUILDING THAT IS BEING PLANNED. THIS WAS FOLLOWED UP BY AN INTERVIEW WITH THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER. CAM DEPARTED ON MARCH 1.

8. CONCLUSION: CAM'S VISIT TO SWAZILAND PRODUCED SOME VERY MIXED RESULTS. CAM'S BIGGEST WEAKNESSES

WERE HIS UNFAMILIARITY WITH CONDITIONS AND CONSTRAINTS IN DEVELOPING AFRICAN COUNTRIES. AS AN EXAMPLE, CAM CONSISTENTLY EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR EVERYONE INVOLVED IN URBAN HOUSING TO MAKE A PROFIT. IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES THIS IS GENERALLY NOT AN IMPORTANT FACTOR. DUE TO THE EXTREMELY LOW INCOMES THAT THE URBAN POOR HAVE, THE IDEA OF MAKING A PROFIT ON LOW-COST HOUSING IS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE. THE BEST THAT ONE CAN HOPE FOR IS THAT THE PROJECTS BREAK EVEN, AND USUALLY EVEN THIS IS UNREALISTIC. A SECOND EXAMPLE WOULD BE CAM'S OBSERVATION THAT THE RURAL POPULATION WAS, IN EFFECT, DOING NOTHING AND SHOULD BE TRAINED TO DO CONSTRUCTION WORK. HE SEEMS TO IGNORE THE POSSIBILITY THAT THEY MIGHT BE INVOLVED FULL-TIME IN EARNING OUT A SUBSISTENCE EXISTENCE.

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9. POST HAD BEEN LED TO BELIEVE THAT CAM WAS PREPARED TO DISCUSS TECHNICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE METHODS INVOLVED IN LOW-COST URBAN PLANNING. BY CONCENTRATING ON HIS PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENTS AND HIS ABILITY AS AN AMERICAN BLACK TO "MAKE IT" INSIDE THE SYSTEM, CAM IGNORED THE IMPORTANT NEED FOR SOUND ADVICE AND GUIDANCE WHICH IS PARALYZING THE GOS HOUSING POLICY. THE FACT THAT CAM IS A BLACK AMERICAN IS FAR LESS IMPORTANT TO SWAZIS THAN HIS BEING A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE WORLD'S MOST ADVANCED TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY, WHICH SUPPOSEDLY HAS COME ANSWERS AND ALTERNATIVES FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. THE WORST ASPECT OF THIS IS THAT WORK TRAVELS AWFULLY QUICKLY IN A TOWN AS SMALL AS MBABANE, AND WHEN WE BRING AMSPECS TO SWAZILAND IN THE FUTURE, THERE MAY BE RELUCTANCE ON THE PART OF LOCAL PEOPLE TO BECOME INVOLVED.
WACHOB

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